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## CORRESPONDENCE

245 WEST 139TH ST.,  
NEW YORK CITY,  
January 11, 1920.

CARTER G. WOODSON, Ph.D.,  
Editor, THE JOURNAL OF NEGRO HISTORY,  
Washington, D. C.

*Dear Sir:*

In the January, 1920, number of *The Journal of Negro History* there is an affidavit of Kelly Miller and Whitefield McKinlay to the effect that Mr. Cardoza, at one time secretary of State for South Carolina, stated to them that a number of colored men met and appointed a committee which was sent to Washington to get the advice of Charles Sumner and Thaddeus Stevens concerning the formation of the political organization for the newly enfranchised Negro shortly after the adoption of the 14th Amendment, pains being taken to keep the plans from both the native whites and the so-called carpet-baggers from the North, and that both Mr. Sumner and Mr. Stevens advised the committee to tender the leadership to native whites of the master class of conservative views, but that the plan was frustrated because they were unable to secure the consent of desired representatives of the former class to assume the proffered leadership.

I accept the fact that Mr. Cardoza made the statement as sworn to by Prof. Miller and Mr. McKinlay, but I must state with all of the emphasis that is possible that it is inconceivable to me how Mr. Sumner or Mr. Stevens could give such advice that would give the leadership of the newly enfranchised Negroes to native whites of the master class, however conservative. All rebels were alike to Mr. Sumner and Mr. Stevens. No reference to conservative men of the master class will be found in the speeches or writings of either one.

I have read the speeches of both men on the Reconstruction measures as published in the *Congressional Globe* and I have failed to find one word uttered by either one that would lead me to believe that they would give the advice as stated in the affidavit. Both men

held radical views as to reconstruction plans for the rebel States and were chiefly instrumental in having the Reconstruction Acts and the 14th Amendment passed. If it had not been for their untiring and persistent efforts, especially of Mr. Stevens, who practically dominated the House of Representatives from 1861 to the date of his death, I venture the assertion that the Reconstruction Acts and the 14th Amendment as passed could not have been passed.

It is possible that there were Negroes in South Carolina who had never felt the lash of the master class who were willing to curry favor with that class, regardless of the gratitude due the Northern men, white and colored, but I do not believe that the Northern Negroes (R. B. Elliott, Judge Wright, Judge Whipper, Henry W. Purvis, S. A. Swails, Dr. B. A. Bosemon, R. H. Gleaves, B. F. Randolph and others) would have deserted their Northern brethren, nor do I believe that the great men of the Republican Party (Conkling, Fessenden, Wade, Morton, Weed, Seward, Stanton, Chase, Boutwell, Washburne, Blaine, Sherman, Schurz, Phelps, Morrill, Bingham, Henry Wilson, Hoar and others) would have stood for the consummation of such a plan. I am sure, from what I knew of the Negroes of South Carolina, that they would have rebelled against the plan. If any committee went on to Washington it is possible that the members suggested the plan to Mr. Sumner and Mr. Stevens, but for them to advise along that line, a thousand times, no.

Everything done by Mr. Sumner and Mr. Stevens was done openly and above board and if they had given the advice as stated in the affidavit they would have had the courage of their convictions to have stated so publicly. It was not in their nature to play the cards from under the table.

Mr. Stevens, who was the author of the Reconstruction Act and most of the Reconstruction measures, ranking next to Alexander Hamilton as a constructive statesman, had embodied in the Act an oath that would have precluded men of the former master class, radical or conservative, from having anything to do with the Reconstruction legislation for the former rebel States. They could not register; therefore, they could not vote nor hold office until all of the provisions of the Reconstruction Acts, including the ratification of the 14th Amendment, were complied with, and their political disabilities removed. Practically all of the "cracker" element or "poor buckra" as designated by the Negroes could vote but the statement does not include that element.

The Republican Party was organized in South Carolina in July, 1867, and Northern men, white and colored, took an active part in the deliberations, R. H. Gleaves, a Northern Negro, being the President of the convention.

The Constitutional Convention met in Charleston, January 14, 1868, the Northern men practically dominating the proceedings, and before adjournment a State ticket was nominated. R. K. Scott, a Northern white man, was nominated for Governor. There were other white men (Northern) on the ticket. The Governor and Lieutenant-Governor were elected for two years and the other State officers for four years. This would indicate that the Northern men held the situation well in hand.

The South Carolina legislature under the Constitution of 1865, refused to ratify the proposed 14th Amendment on December 20, 1866. This legislature was composed of Democrats, all of the master class, conservative and radical, and in view of this it is incomprehensible to me how intelligent Negroes could have thought of tendering the leadership to any men of the master class. The conditions were such that men of the master class could not have accepted the leadership had they so desired after repudiating the 14th Amendment.

I have read Rhodes, Dunning, Burgess, Hart, Hollis, Pike, and Schouler, on Reconstruction, also S. W. McCall's *Biography of Thaddeus Stevens*, E. B. Callender's *Thaddeus Stevens, the Commoner*, and E. L. Pierce's *Memoirs and Letters of Charles Sumner*, and cannot find anything that would indicate that either Mr. Sumner or Mr. Stevens would give the advice as stated in the affidavit.

When Mr. Stevens introduced the proposed 14th Amendment it contained the following section:

Section 3.—Until July 4, 1870, all persons who voluntarily adhered to the late insurrection, giving it aid and comfort, shall be excluded from the right to vote for Representatives in Congress and for Electors for President and Vice-President.

This section was defeated but relative to it Mr. Stevens in a speech said:

“The 3rd section may encounter more difference here. Among the people I believe it will be the most popular of all the provisions; it prohibits rebels from voting for members of Congress and electors of President until 1870. My only objection to it is that it is too lenient.

I would be glad to see it extended to 1878, and to include all State and municipal as well as national elections.”

There are two things about the advice that seem incongruous. First that intelligent Negroes would think that any men of the master class would join hands with them, some of whom had probably been their slaves, to govern the State. In the second place it is hard to believe that Sumner and Stevens, men of brilliant legal minds, would give advice that could not be carried out, even if practicable.

No man of the master class in South Carolina, however conservative, would stand for being called a scalawag.

There were practically no Union men in South Carolina. There were a few men who opposed secession at the time but when the ordinance of secession was passed a man who did not go with the State was considered a traitor. South Carolina was not considered a safe place for a white man who was opposed to secession after the ordinance was passed. This probably accounts for the statement in the last part of the affidavit relative to the frustration of the plans.

I regard the statement in reference to Messrs. Sumner and Stevens as a reflection on the memory of two of the greatest friends of the Negro.

History, unless it is based on facts, incontrovertible facts, is worthless.

If there are any readers of *The Journal of Negro History* who can produce “irrefragable evidence” relative to this matter I would be glad if they would do so. Truth is supreme and everlasting.

Prof. R. T. Greener, now of Chicago, Harvard’s first Negro graduate, and the first and only Negro who occupied a chair in one of the old Southern universities, delivered on Public Day, June 29, 1874, in the historic South Carolina University, a most eloquent and scholarly address on “Charles Sumner, the Idealist, Statesman and Scholar.” It made such an impression on the members of the faculty that they requested Prof. Greener to allow them to have it published and distributed. Professor Greener was the only Negro on the faculty. He occupied the chair of Mental and Moral Philosophy. Professor Greener was closer to Mr. Sumner than any other colored man, although very much younger, and enjoyed a friendship with the Senator vouchsafed to very few white men. It is possible that he may be able to throw some light on the subject in so far as Mr. Sumner is concerned.

Letters from scholars in this field will help us to learn the truth. A copy of a letter from J. F. Rhodes follows:

RAVENSLEFT, SEAL HARBOR, MAINE,  
Sept. 27, 1920.

HENRY A. WALLACE,

*Dear Sir:*

I have your valued favor of 23 with enclosure. It is now about fourteen years since I made my study of Reconstruction, and on some details my memory is not fresh, but I have no hesitation in saying that I never found anything that would lead me to believe that either Sumner or Stevens was in favor of the scheme outlined. The story told by the affidavit "does not fit into the situation" as Samuel R. Gardiner used to say. Nothing but irrefragible evidence could lead one to such a view. Your examination of the subject seems to have been thorough and I thank you for giving me the results of it.

Very truly yours,

enc. returned                      Signed.                      JAMES F. RHODES.

*A Copy of a Letter from Samuel W. McCall*

24 MT. VERNON ST., September 13, 1920.

MR. HENRY A. WALLACE,  
245 West 139th St.,  
New York, N. Y.

*Dear Sir:*

In reply to your favor of the 3rd inst., with enclosed copy of the affidavit concerning the position of Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner upon the proposed policy of organization for the negroes, I would say that I do not remember ever having come across anything of the kind in my researches concerning Mr. Stevens, nor have I ever heard of it about Mr. Sumner.

Very truly yours,

Signed.                      SAM'L. W. MCCALL.

*A Copy of a Letter from Hon. H. C. Lodge.*

NAHANT, MASS.,  
September 8, 1920.

*My dear Sir:*

I have received your letter of the 6th. I have never heard before of the point which you raise in regard to Mr. Sumner and

really know nothing about it. As I am separated from my library, which is in Washington, I am sorry that I can give you no information about it, but if you would examine the *Life of Charles Sumner* by Edward L. Pierce, which is very elaborate and thorough, you would find something about it there, if anywhere.

Very truly yours,

Signed.

H. C. LODGE.

HENRY A. WALLACE, Esq.,  
245 West 139th St.,  
New York, N. Y.

As the native white men of the master class were ineligible to hold office until the new Constitution and the 14th Amendment were ratified and their political disabilities were removed, even had they acted in an advisory capacity to the newly enfranchised Negroes, the Northern men being eliminated, only Negroes and white men of the "cracker" element could have held office and have been elected delegates to the Constitutional Convention.

There were some native white men of the "cracker" element in the Constitutional Convention and also in the first legislature elected.

Very respectfully,

HENRY A. WALLACE.

245 WEST 139TH ST.,  
NEW YORK CITY,  
January 16, 1921.

CARTER G. WOODSON, Ph.D.,  
Editor, THE JOURNAL OF NEGRO HISTORY,  
1216 You St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

*Dear Sir:*

In connection with my letter to you of the 11th instant, pertaining to the affidavit of Messrs. Miller and McKinlay relative to the statement made by Mr. Francis Cardoza to them concerning Mr. Sumner and Mr. Stevens, as published in *The Journal of Negro History* for January, 1920, I respectfully invite your attention to a copy of a letter from Dr. J. W. Burgess, formerly of Columbia University. You will find him listed in "Who's Who in America."

Dr. Burgess is the author of two books covering the Civil War and the Reconstruction period, *The Civil War and the Constitution* and *Reconstruction and the Constitution*, and evidently made a thorough research in collecting the data for publication.

I regard this as a very important matter and the truth or falsity of the statement should be established. It is only by publicity that the facts can be established.

The names of Stevens and Sumner should be imperishable to the Negro race and any reflection on their attitude during the Reconstruction period should not go unchallenged.

A copy of letter from John W. Burgess follows:

BROOKLINE, MASS.,  
January 14, 1921.

MR. HENRY A. WALLACE:

Your favor of January 12, forwarded to me here, interests me highly, and I thank you most sincerely for it. I am obliged to reply, however, that the affidavit of Messrs Miller and McKinlay astonished me very much. I cannot remember to have ever read anything of the kind anywhere and like you, I am very skeptical about it. I was in the world and a student at Amherst College in the year 1867, and was even then collecting the material for my history. I am pretty sure that I should have known of anything of this kind had it existed. I am going to try to run this assertion down, as I am here among the acquaintances and relatives of Sumner.

Very sincerely yours,  
Signed. JOHN W. BURGESS.

I have written to Dr. Burgess to inform me as to the result of his investigation and will let you know what he reports.

Yours very truly,  
HENRY A. WALLACE.